

## Raise your hand: Schools seek volunteers in staffing crunch

By CAROLYN THOMPSON

With teacher absences mounting and substitutes in short supply, parents may be wondering: Who's teaching the kids?

The answer around the U.S. could be a local police officer, National Guard soldier, state budget analyst, parent or recent high school graduate — nearly anyone willing to help keep schools' doors open through the omicron-driven staffing crunch.

States have been loosening teaching requirements to give schools more flexibility on hiring as coronavirus exposures, illness and quarantines add to strains on schools that also have been tapping librarians, custodians and support staff to help cover classrooms during the pandemic.

ic. Brian McKinney, a parent with students in second and 10th grade in Hays County, Texas, spent part of this week as a substitute, helping sixth graders through a social studies assignment that had them writing essays about the Soviet Union. A former teacher, he decided he could help as he waited out a cold snap that has slowed business at the World War II-themed miniature golf course he and his wife now own.

"There was no down time today; I was heavily involved with the kids," he said after school Tuesday. The measures have kept schools from having to revert to the waves of remote learning that disrupted homes and left many students behind earlier in the pandemic.



In this photo provided by the Hays Consolidated Independent School District, Brian McKinney, right, who has children in the Hays Consolidated Independent School District, in Kyle, Texas, teaches a class at Johnson High School, in Buda, Texas, Thursday, Jan. 27, 2022.

Associated Press  
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**Continued from Front**

Supporters say it's better to have students in school, where they are supervised and have access to food and services, even if the solutions fall short academically.

Still, the lowering of the bar for teachers raises some concerns about whether schools are just treading water. In some cases when possible, virtual school taught by students' regular teachers could be a better alternative, said Richard Ingersoll, an expert on the teaching profession at the University of Pennsylvania.

"Remote sometimes might be much more preferable to getting some substitute in there who's basically babysitting," he said.

Governors have been issuing executive orders to make more people eligible to work in schools. In states including California, Connecticut, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, governors have taken action to give schools more flexibility to bring back retired teachers for short-term assignments. Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt and Utah Gov. Spencer Cox have made it possible for schools to dip into the states' workforces.

Cox's executive order allows state workers, including budget analysts, social workers and highway patrol officers, to take up to 30 hours of administrative leave to work as substitute teachers or in other school jobs. Oklahoma's initiative lets state workers volunteer



**New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, left, announced efforts to temporarily employ National Guard troops and state bureaucrats as substitute teachers and preschool caregivers, during a news conference, at Santa Fe High School, in Santa Fe, N.M., Jan. 19, 2022**

Associated Press

as substitute teachers and continue to receive their state salary.

"We know that kids learn best in the classroom, so we want to do what we can to help schools stay open. Our teachers and our children deserve our support during this difficult phase of the pandemic," Cox said in a statement.

In Kansas, the state Board of Education has begun allowing districts to hire substitute teachers as young as 18 and with little more than a high school diploma after waiving requirements they have at least 60 college credits, the equivalent of at least two years, to receive a temporary license. The changes will last only

until June 1, when the more stringent requirements will return. State officials in Nevada will consider a similar change for emergencies for the state's two most populous counties later this month. Currently, substitute teachers must have at least 60 college credits — or an associate degree or higher — to obtain a license.

In addition to asking state workers to step up, New Mexico has called in the National Guard to work as substitute teachers, an unprecedented move that has troops drawing their usual pay for serving on active duty.

At least some schools are choosing to prioritize time with professional teachers,

even if it means students don't keep a full schedule. In Millville Public Schools in New Jersey, administrators were so concerned about the toll on learning after months of staffing challenges that they moved middle and high school students to a half-day schedule — with teachers — for the month of February. "After an analysis of our staffing over the past 5 months, we determined instruction at the secondary level has been severely impacted due to students' lack of access to direct instruction on a daily basis. Moving to an early dismissal schedule will address our staffing shortages by utilizing our current employees so that we are delivering

consistent instruction from teaching professionals," a notice on the district's website said. In the Hays Consolidated Independent School District in Texas, where McKinney filled in as a sub this week, at one point in January the district needed 455 subs in a single day, well over the usual 185, and could fill only 40% of the need, district spokesperson Tim Savoy said.

The district raised the pay to an average of \$120 a day, up from about \$90, and invited parents to join the ranks of substitutes, waiving for some a requirement they have 30 hours of college. About half of the 60 new subs hired in January were parents, Savoy said.

After an orientation that included refreshers on things like classroom management and discipline, along with a background check that included fingerprinting, there are days McKinney has his pick from a long list of assignments but gravitates first to his specialties of history and physical education.

He said remote learning was hard on families like his that had to juggle kids and jobs, and he praised the district for working to stay open, even if it meant making exceptions for those running the classrooms.

"That's a huge emotional and physiological burden on families," he said of virtual school, "so I think Hays is just trying to figure out every possible option to not have to do that to families." □

## Biden signs bill to honor WWII Ghost Army soldiers



**This photo provided by Andrea J. Cheeney shows four generations of the McKane family pose with an inflatable tank at the Ghost Army exhibit on June 7, 2021 at Historical Society of Cheshire County, Keene N.H.**

Associated Press

**CONCORD, N.H. (AP)** — Members of two top-secret World War II military units referred to as the "Ghost Army" will be awarded the Congressional Gold Medal more than 75 years after their service, under legislation signed into law by President Joe Biden.

The Ghost Army refers to two units that used inflatable equipment, sound effects, radio trickery, and other deceptions in Europe to draw enemy forces away from American units, saving an estimated 30,000 lives. Because of their secret classification, mem-

bers were not recognized for their heroism.

Biden signed the bill Tuesday.

"Through their courageous, creative, and innovative tactics, the top-secret Ghost Army outmaneuvered and deceived the Nazis, saving thousands of Allied lives during World War II," said U.S. Rep. Annie Kuster of New Hampshire, a Democrat who sponsored the bill in the House. "More than 75 years after defeating fascism in Europe, it's time these soldiers receive the highest honor we can award: the Congressional

Gold Medal."

The legislation in the House was co-led by Republican Rep. Chris Stewart of Utah. In the Senate, the legislation was led by Sens. Edward Markey, a Democrat from Massachusetts, and Susan Collins, a Republican from Maine.

Rick Beyer of the Ghost Army Legacy Project worked for seven years to get the bill passed. "Armed with their wits and guile these men saved lives and helped win the war," he said in a statement. "Their story is an inspiration to all of us!" □



# Slow down: States get infrastructure cash for speed cameras

By HOPE YEN

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Drivers, beware: Speed cameras could be on their way to a location near you thanks to President Joe Biden's infrastructure law.

Under new federal guidance issued Wednesday, states can now tap billions of federal highway dollars for roadway safety programs such as automated traffic enforcement. They are being told that cameras that photograph speeding vehicles are an established way to help bring down rising traffic deaths. It's all part of the Transportation Department's new national strategy to stem record increases in road fatalities with a broad-based "safe system" approach that promotes better road design, lower speed limits and more car safety regulations. The guidance by the Federal Highway Administration cites speed cameras in particular as a proven enforcement tool against hazardous driving. The Federal Highway Administration's goal "is to help state and local transportation agencies across the country deliver projects that make streets, highways and bridges safe



Speed cameras are aimed at U.S. Route 127, in New Miami, Ohio, Feb. 25, 2014.

Associated Press

and accessible for all users," agency Deputy Administrator Stephanie Pollack said. "States now have more flexibility and funding to make highway safety improvements." Sometimes dubbed "speed traps," automated traffic enforcement can rake in millions of dollars in ticket revenue for local communities but has spurred backlash and isn't widely embraced. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety estimates only about 159 communities make

widespread use of speed cameras, even after the National Transportation Safety Board in 2017 urged greater use of them to deter crashes. Motorists often complain speed cameras can be inaccurate, but are almost impossible to dispute in court. Eight states specifically forbid the use of speed cameras, while another two dozen or so have no specific legislation to support their use. Still, as traffic deaths have spiked up during the coronavirus pandemic, auto

safety groups including the Governors Highway Safety Association have increasingly pointed to automated traffic enforcement as more reliable and equitable than police traffic stops, which can pose risks of confrontation between a motorist and police officer. They released a checklist last summer aimed at providing a roadmap to build community support. More than 1 in 4 traffic fatalities occur in speed-related crashes, according to government data. The

Federal Highway Administration says speed cameras can reduce the number of injury crashes by nearly 50%.

"Automated speed enforcement, if deployed equitably and applied appropriately to roads with the greatest risk of harm due to speeding, can provide significant safety benefits and save lives," according to the Transportation Department's safety strategy released last week.

The department said that under the previous five-year transportation bill, states were mostly confined to spending highway safety money for hard infrastructure projects, such as building sidewalks; use of federal money for speed cameras was prohibited except in school zones. Now, under Biden's new law, states have the option to use up to 10% of the \$15.6 billion in total highway safety money available over five years for specified non-infrastructure programs, such as public awareness campaigns, automated enforcement of traffic safety laws and measures to protect children walking and bicycling to school. □

# Army to immediately start discharging vaccine refusers



Christine Wormuth speaks during a Senate Armed Services Committee nomination hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington, on May 13, 2021.

Associated Press

By LOLITA C. BALDOR

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The Army said Wednesday it will immediately begin discharging soldiers who have refused to get the manda-

tory COVID-19 vaccine, putting more than 3,300 service members at risk of being thrown out soon. The Army's announcement makes it the final military service to lay out its dis-

charge policy for vaccine refusers. The Marine Corps, Air Force and Navy have already discharged active-duty troops or entry-level personnel at boot camps for refusing the shots. So far, the Army has not discharged any.

According to data released by the Army last week, more than 3,300 soldiers have refused to get the vaccine. The Army has said that more than 3,000 soldiers have been issued official written reprimands, which suggests they are already identified in the disciplinary process, and some of them could be among the first to be discharged. The Pentagon has ordered all service members — active-duty, National Guard and Reserves — to get the vaccine, saying it is critical

to maintaining the health and readiness of the force. COVID-19 cases continue

to surge around the country as a result of the omicron variant. □

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# Winter storm packing snow, freezing rain moves across U.S.

**Associated Press**

**CHICAGO (AP)** — A major winter storm with millions of Americans in its path brought a mix of rain, freezing rain and snow to the central U.S. on Wednesday as airlines canceled thousands of flights, officials urged residents to stay off roads and schools closed campuses.

The blast of frigid weather, which began arriving Tuesday night, put a long stretch of states from New Mexico and Colorado to Maine under winter storm warnings and watches. On Wednesday morning, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan saw freezing rain, sleet and snow.

More than a foot of snow was expected in parts of central Missouri and Michigan, and up to a foot of snow could fall Wednesday and Thursday in central and northeastern Illinois. Twelve to 18 inches (30 to 45 centimeters) of snow was possible in areas of northern Indiana, said Andrew Orrison, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in College Park, Maryland. "For a lot of areas, we are going to be looking at significant amounts of snowfall and also ice," he said. In Chicago, Elisha Waldman and his sons welcomed the opportunity to



A woman walks to a bus shelter on Dr. Martin Luther King Drive as a man waits in the shelter during the pre-dawn hours Wednesday, Feb. 2, 2022, in Chicago.

**Associated Press**

hit a sledding hill Wednesday morning, even as snow was falling over the city.

"Cold and wet and wonderful, and getting cold and wet is part of the fun with the guys, and we get to go inside and have hot cocoa and warm up," Waldman said.

In Detroit's western suburbs, Tony Haley also found an advantage to the weather. He owns a landscaping and irrigation company that offers snow removal and salting services, but the early winter weeks of-

fered few opportunities for business.

"This one here, we're looking for a good two, three days of work," Haley said after clearing snow away from several businesses in Canton.

But for those on the roads, the heavy snow created hazardous conditions.

"We're receiving a lot of snow over here in northwest Indiana and it's the wet, slushy snow that causes treacherous driving conditions to say the least," Indiana State Police Sgt. Glen

Fifield told WFLD-TV.

In central Missouri, officials shut down part of Interstate 70 midday after a crash made the roadway impassable.

Areas south of the heavy snow were expected to see freezing rain, with the heaviest ice predicted along the lower Ohio Valley area from Louisville, Kentucky, to Memphis, Tennessee.

"If everything holds to where it is right now, this is the real deal," said Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear,

who ordered state government offices to close on Thursday. "It is dangerous. People need to be prepared."

The disruptive storm moved across the central U.S. on Groundhog Day, the same day the famed groundhog Punxsutawney Phil predicted six more weeks of winter. The storm came on the heels of a nor'easter last weekend that brought blizzard conditions to many parts of the East Coast.

The storm's path extended as far south as Texas, nearly a year after a catastrophic freeze buckled the state's power grid in one of the worst blackouts in U.S. history. The forecast did not call for the same prolonged and frigid temperatures as the February 2021 storm, and the National Weather Service said the system would, generally, not be as bad this time for Texas.

No large-scale power outages were reported by early afternoon Wednesday in Texas or elsewhere, according to poweroutage.us.

Snowfall totals reached 22 inches (56 centimeters) in Colorado Springs and up to 10 inches (25 centimeters) in the Denver area, with more expected, prompting universities, state government offices and the Legislature to shut down. □

## Punxsutawney Phil predicts six more weeks of winter



Groundhog Club handler A.J. Dereume interacts with Punxsutawney Phil, the weather prognosticating groundhog, during the 136th celebration of Groundhog Day on Gobbler's Knob in Punxsutawney, Pa., Wednesday, Feb. 2, 2022.

**Associated Press**

**PUNXSUTAWNEY, Pa. (AP)** — There will be six more weeks of winter, Punxsutawney Phil predicted as

he emerged from his burrow Wednesday to perform his Groundhog Day duties. Thousands of people from

around the nation and other countries gathered at Gobbler's Knob as members of Punxsutawney Phil's "inner circle" summoned him from his tree stump at dawn to learn if he had seen his shadow, a message they said Phil communicated in "groundhogese." After Phil's prediction was announced, the crowd repeatedly chanted "six more weeks!"

According to folklore, spring would come early if he didn't see it.

The event took place virtually last year because of the coronavirus pandemic, depriving the community, which is about 65 miles (105 kilometers) northeast of

Pittsburgh, of a boost from tourists. It was streamed live and seen by more than 15,000 viewers worldwide at one point. About 150 cardboard cutouts of fans were there to "watch."

The annual event has its origin in a German legend about a furry rodent.

According to records dating back to 1887, Phil has predicted winter more than 100 times. Ten years were lost because no records were kept, organizers said. The 2020 forecast called for an early spring.

Punxsutawney Phil may be the most famous groundhog seer but he's certainly not the only one, and one competitor disagreed with

his prediction. New York City's Staten Island Chuck expects an early spring, according to Staten Island District Attorney Michael McMahon, who presided over a ceremony that was livestreamed from Chuck's home at the Staten Island Zoo.

"He did not see his shadow. We will have an early spring," McMahon announced.

New York Mayor Eric Adams did not attend the ceremony but said in a videotaped message, "Chuck has been very accurate in his predictions since 1981. I think I can speak for all New Yorkers when I say, 'Chuck, please don't see your shadow.'" □



# EU wants to allow natural gas, nuclear in green investment

By **SAMUEL PETREQUIN**

**Associated Press**

**BRUSSELS (AP)** — The European Union on Wednesday proposed including nuclear energy and natural gas in its plans for building a climate-friendly future, dividing member countries and drawing outcry from environmentalists as "greenwashing."

The green labeling system from the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, defines what qualifies as an investment in sustainable energy in the 27-nation bloc. Under certain conditions, gas and nuclear energy could be part of the mix, making it easier for private investors to inject money into both.

The plan seemed designed to please the EU's two most powerful nations: France is reliant on nuclear power, which raises concerns about long-term impact on the environment, and Germany depends on gas, a fossil fuel many consider a bridge to renewables.

But Steffi Lemke, the German environment minister, lambasted the plan over its nuclear power provision.

"Today's decision by the European Commission is unacceptable. Like many other EU member states, Germany is clearly and unequivocally against the inclusion of nuclear power



**Climate activists pose with masks of EU leaders, from left, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and French President Emmanuel Macron during an action in front of EU headquarters in Brussels, Wednesday, Feb. 2, 2022.**

**Associated Press**

in the taxonomy," she said. "Nuclear power is anything but sustainable, it is risky, too expensive, and the construction and planning processes are too lengthy to contribute to climate neutrality by 2050."

EU members Austria and Luxembourg already have raised the possibility of legal disputes as they challenge the green notion of nuclear.

The commission says including nuclear and gas as transitional energy sources

does not amount to a free pass and aims to accelerate efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

"We are setting out strict conditions to help mobilize finance to support this transition away from more harmful energy sources like coal," said Mairead McGuinness, the commissioner in charge of financial services.

Critics call it a big blow to climate goals.

"This anti-science plan represents the biggest green-

washing exercise of all time. It makes a mockery of the EU's claims to global leadership on climate and the environment," Greenpeace EU sustainable finance campaigner Ariadna Rodrigo said.

With the EU aiming to reach climate neutrality by 2050 and to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, the bloc says the so-called taxonomy classification system is crucial to direct investments into sustainable energy. It esti-

mates that about 350 billion euros of investment per year will be needed to meet the 2030 targets.

Energy use accounts for about three-quarters of the greenhouse gas emissions produced in the EU. Commission officials believe that as long as there are not enough renewables available, gas and nuclear will help phase out more harmful energy sources.

Under the plan, gas projects must meet emission thresholds and achieve reduction targets. They also should replace existing coal facilities that cannot be substituted with renewables and switch to renewable or low-carbon gases by 2035.

For nuclear, the commission said research, development and use of advanced technologies reducing waste and improving safety will be included. New nuclear plants producing electricity or heat are allowed until 2045.

France, which derives about 70% of its electricity from nuclear energy, led the charge for its inclusion with several other EU countries that operate nuclear power plants. A low-carbon alternative to fossil fuels, nuclear energy represented around 26% of the electricity produced in the bloc in 2019. □

# Lebanon's taxi, bus and van drivers block roads in protest

**BEIRUT (AP)** — Scores of Lebanon's taxi, bus and truck drivers started a three-day strike on Wednesday, blocking roads and demanding the government address surging prices and a broader economic crisis. It was the second time in three weeks unions held strike action, forcing schools, universities, and many shops to close. With public transport virtually nonexistent in Lebanon, many rely on such shared taxis, buses or minivans for their daily commute and travel.

Beirut was eerily quiet as protesting drivers blocked its main highways and inter-

sections, some with burning fires. Unions have said the strike actions will last from 5:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.

"There was a time when a taxi driver's son could become a doctor, an engineer, anything prestigious," said taxi driver Hussein Assam, 55, who was protesting near central Beirut's once thriving Hamra Street. "Now the taxi driver can't even feed his children."

Lebanon's crippling economic crisis has been described by the World Bank as one of the worst in the past century, and unions have routinely held protests and strikes since the government officially ended

state subsidies in October. A full tank of gasoline now costs more than the monthly minimum wage.

A government gridlock seemed to ease somewhat on Jan. 24, when the powerful Hezbollah group and its main Shiite ally ended months of boycott on the body. It now hopes to elaborate the 2022 budget and an economic recovery plan.

Back near Hamra street, taxi driver Assam was joined by two other drivers as they waited for orders to shut down traffic.

"If there's no outcome today, there will be later," he said, looking on the former



**Dump trucks block a main highway during a general strike by public transport unions protesting the country's deteriorating economic and financial conditions in Beirut, Lebanon, Wednesday, Feb. 2, 2022.**

**Associated Press**

commercial boulevard that has been reduced to penury. "The poor person

who can't eat anymore is going to burn the entire country." □



# Israel upholds use of surveillance technology on protesters

**JERUSALEM (AP)** — Israel's attorney general has upheld the Shin Bet security agency's use of mobile-phone tracking technology to monitor and threaten Palestinian protesters at Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site last year.

The decision, which came on Tuesday, drew harsh criticism from the civil rights group that challenged the use of the technology. The group warned that it would have a "chilling effect" on the country's Arab minority. The attorney general's move was in response to a complaint over a series of text messages sent out last May to hundreds of Palestinians at the height of one of the city's most turbulent periods in years. At the time, Palestinian protesters were clashing with Israeli police at the Al Aqsa Mosque in violence that helped spark an 11-day war between Israel and Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip.

Using its tracking technology, the Shin Bet sent a text message to people who were determined to be in the area of the clashes and told them "we will hold you accountable" for acts of violence.

The recipients included both Palestinian residents



**A Palestinian man runs away from tear gas during clashes with Israeli security forces in front of the Dome of the Rock Mosque at the Al Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem's Old City Monday, May 10, 2021.**

**Associated Press**

of east Jerusalem, as well as Palestinian citizens of Israel. While some recipients had participated in the clashes, many others, such as people who lived, worked or prayed in the area, received the message erroneously and said they were surprised or scared by the message.

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, a civil-society group, filed a complaint to the office of Attor-

ney General Avichai Mandelblit, urging him to halt the use of the technology. It cited the use of the tool on a large group of people and the threatening language of the text.

In its response, the attorney general's office acknowledged there had been problems with the message, both with its language and because the mass distribution included unintended targets. But it

said the use of the technology was a legitimate security tool and that the security service has revised its procedures to avoid similar mistakes in the future.

"After discussions with us on this subject, lessons were learned in the security agency and guidelines formulated in various aspects with the goal of preventing a recurrence of problems like this," said the opinion. It said the office planned no

further intervention in the matter.

Tuesday was the final day of Mandelblit's six-year term. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, or ACRI, expressed disappointment with the ruling.

"They say they have the authority to continue sending these kind of texts to people," said Gil Gan-Mor, who heads the group's unit on human rights in the digital age. "We think differently." He said authorities have tools to investigate and prosecute people suspected in violence, but sending threatening messages was not the way to maintain security.

"Obviously this will have a chilling effect, to say the least, on practicing legitimate activities, like going to a protest or going to pray somewhere," he said. The group was studying the decision and would decide in the coming days whether to file an appeal to the Israeli Supreme Court, he added.

ACRI has previously filed legal challenges to the government's use of the same Shin Bet tracking technology as a contact-tracing tool to prevent the spread of the coronavirus early in the pandemic. □

# Taliban reopen universities for Afghan women in 6 provinces



**Afghan girls participate a lesson at Tajrobawai Girls High School, in Herat, Afghanistan, Thursday, Nov. 25, 2021.**

**Associated Press**

By TAMEEM AKHGAR  
Associated Press  
ISLAMABAD (AP) — The Taliban on Wednesday said they have reopened public universities for women students in six of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, a move mark-

ing a major concession to international demands by the country's new rulers. Since they swept into power in mid-August, the international community has watched to see whether the Taliban will impose the

same harsh measures as during their 1990s rule of Afghanistan, including banning girls from education and women from the workplace and public life.

The Taliban have imposed several restrictions, many of them on women, since their takeover — women have been banned from many jobs outside the health and teaching sector, and girls have not been able to go to school after grade six. The Taliban demand women wear headscarves but have stopped short of imposing the burqa, the head-to covering that was compulsory under their previous rule.

The Taliban-run culture and information ministry said Wednesday that public universities in the provinces of

Nangarhar and Kandahar were now open for women in what it described as a staggered process expected to see all students — men and women — eventually return to university.

Later in the day, the Taliban spokesman for the ministry of higher education, Ahmad Taqqi, said public universities also reopened Wednesday for women in four more provinces — Helmand, Farah, Nimroz, and Laghman.

The six provinces have warmer climates than the rest of Afghanistan where the winters are bitterly cold, which the Taliban say is the reason they are the first to reopen. Men will attend classes in the morning and women in the afternoon, aligning with a gender-seg-

regated system under the Taliban.

Earlier this week, Abdul Baqi Haqqani, the Taliban-appointed education minister, said that public universities elsewhere in Afghanistan, including the University of Kabul, would reopen for both men and women on Feb. 26.

"All instructors and officials are advised to concentrate on their responsibilities and provide the required facilities for the students," Haqqani said in a recorded video clip on Sunday.

The United Nations mission in Afghanistan welcomed his announcement, calling it "important for Afghanistan" in a tweet Tuesday. "So crucial that every young person has equal access to education." □



# Hunger crisis looms in Nigeria's 'food basket' amid conflict

**AGATU, Nigeria (AP)** — It's 2 p.m. and Hannah Mgbede asks her husband if she can take her first break of the day from threshing rice so she can breastfeed their 18-month-old baby girl fastened to her back during the grueling work. Her husband Ibrahim Mohammed, 45, used to harvest as many as 10 bags of rice a year from his farm. But that dropped to just three bags after attackers burned his home to the ground a few years ago, as violence between farmers and herders escalated across the northwest and central parts of Nigeria. With that decreased yield, Mohammed hasn't made enough money to buy seedlings to grow yams, soybeans and guinea corn (sorghum).

"Sometimes we manage to eat once (a day)," says Mohammed, who has three children, aged five and younger. "Since the crisis, it is only by the grace of God we are feeding to remain alive."

Here in Benue state, harvests of rice, yams and soybeans were once so bountiful that it was called the "food basket of Nigeria." But waves of violence over the last several years have



**Ibrahim Mohammed, left, a farmer who lost most of his seedlings and farmlands to violent attacks in Nigeria's north, works on a rice farm along with his family members in Agatu village on the outskirts of Benue State in northcentral Nigeria, Wednesday, Jan 5, 2022.**

Associated Press

reduced crops in the north-central state of Africa's most populous nation. More than 1 million farmers in the state have been displaced because of the intercommunal violence between herders and farmers competing for water and land, say officials.

"We are heading to a food

crisis," Benue state Gov. Samuel Ortom told The Associated Press.

Across northern Nigeria, at least 13 million are now facing hunger amid a lean season, according to the U.N. World Food Program. The violence has also disrupted the sales of food as roads are too unsafe for

farmers to transport crops and marketplaces have been razed by attackers. Rice production has dropped so much that its price has jumped more than 60% in Benue state as well as some other parts of the country.

"There is a very real risk of famine because both

conflict and COVID-19 has made it harder to reach those most in need," a spokesperson of the U.N. agency told AP.

Thousands of Nigerians have been killed in the decades-long clashes between agrarian communities and nomadic cattle herders who are fighting over limited access to water and grazing land. The farmers often accuse the herders of encroaching in their fields while the herders, mostly from the Fulani ethnic group, claim the croplands are their traditional grazing routes.

The government has now launched an initiative under the National Livestock Transformation Plan in the hope of resolving the conflict which has been worsened by the proliferation of arms and the government's failure to prosecute past perpetrators from both groups.

About 3,000 people who have fled the violence in Benue state are now living at a camp in Guma local government area.

Mtonga Iliamgee, 43, says every day is a struggle to feed her family of 10. She was seen preparing their only meal of the day at 1 p.m. □

# Iranian supertanker carrying condensate docks in Venezuela

By REGINA GARCIA CANO  
Associated Press

**CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)** — An Iran-flagged supertanker carrying more than 2 million barrels of condensate has docked at a Venezuelan port, with both countries facing U.S. sanctions, according to analysts and satellite images analyzed by The Associated Press.

The arrival of the oil tanker Starla comes as negotiations continue in Vienna over the Islamic Republic's tattered nuclear deal with world powers, which allowed for oil sales. In 2018, the U.S. unilaterally withdrew from the accord under then President Donald Trump, sparking years of tensions across the wider Mideast that continue to-

day.

The Starla arrived off the coast of Barcelona, Venezuela, in late January. A satellite photo analyzed by AP from Planet Labs PBC showed the vessel there Sunday and corresponded to other images of the vessel and its helipad.

Its dimensions also matched those of the Starla, which is owned by National Iranian Tanker Co. The U.S. Treasury sanctioned the company in October 2020, saying it helped fund the expeditionary Quds Force of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard.

The Starla represents the first known condensate shipment of 2022 from Iran to arrive in Venezuela as part of a relationship between the two oil-exporting

nations that are both under American sanctions.

Iranian state media has not acknowledged the Starla's arrival in Venezuela after earlier trumpeting other shipments. Iran's mission to the United Nations did not respond to a request for comment.

Samir Madani, co-founder of TankerTrackers.com, said the ship is carrying 2.1 million barrels of a very light form of oil based on natural gas that Venezuela's state-owned company uses to dilute its heavy crude oil to turn into an exportable blend.

Madani said the vessel departed Iran on Dec. 11 and turned off its mandatory Automated Identification System for more than a month and a half. The



**In this satellite photo from Planet Labs PBC, the Iranian oil tanker Starla is seen off the coast of Barcelona, Venezuela, Sunday, Jan. 30, 2022.**

Associated Press

system is used to prevent collisions, but companies in recent years have adopted a number of tech-

niques, including turning it off, to evade detection as the U.S. has expanded economic sanctions. □




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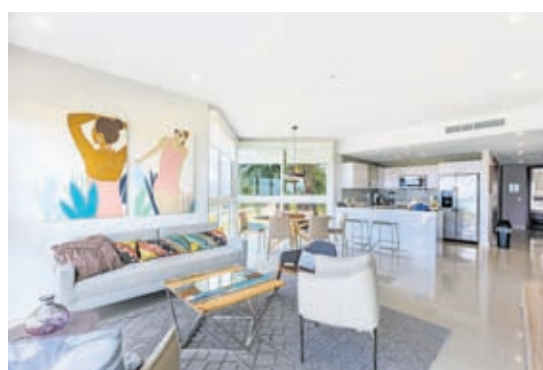
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## Dutch Kingdom's prime ministers meet with UN Secretary-General

**ORANJESTAD – On January 31, 2022, the Dutch Kingdom's Prime Ministers and the Secretary-General of the UN, Mr. António Guterres, held a meeting to address important issues. The Dutch Kingdom's prime ministers were Prime Minister of Aruba Evelyn Wever-Croes, PM of the Netherlands, Mark Rutte, Prime Minister of Curacao, Gilmar Pisas, and the Prime Minister of Saint Maarten, Silveria Jacobs.**

It is an annual meeting where the leaders discuss important and relevant subjects for the entire Dutch Kingdom. Some topics addressed this year was the UN's SDG for 2030, the tense situation on the Russian - Ukraine border, climate, and the necessity for a joint effort to minimize the impact on climate change and the situation in Venezuela and Covid19.

One important topic was the ongoing situation in Venezuela that has had a considerable impact on Aruba. The situation in Venezuela is putting enormous pressure on Aruba and Curacao as concerns immigration from Venezuela. Due to its limited capacity, it is a heavy burden for Aruba,

It led to the request from the islands for more support in solving the humanitarian, economic and political crisis in Venezuela.

They also requested the UN's attention on the effects of climate change on the islands. It is essential to work together on planning, and each member will have to adapt this to their local situation to limit the effects of climate change on each island.

The smaller islands have to deal with regional climate change the pollution caused by larger countries. This pollution causes rising temperatures, hurricanes, and more severe natural disasters.

They also discussed the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on the islands. It affects Aruba, particularly, because of its dependence on tourism and air travel.

Aruba is currently participating in a "multi-dimensional vulnerability index" to find a better balance, not only for the GDP, which is the tool to measure the development of countries but also provides more dimensions of the countries' development.

Another important issue discussed was the liquidity support and debts needed to address the problems caused by the Covid 19

pandemic. It is essential for small countries like Aruba, a Small Island Development State like Aruba, that otherwise will never get out of the economic crisis.

The participating islands informed that the Dutch Kingdom will present their "Voluntary National Review", a national voluntary report of how each island is complying with the "Sustainable Development Goals". It will be presented during a political forum in the upcoming

months about the faced successes and challenges with the hope to help other countries as well.

The Prime Minister of Aruba stated the meeting was fruitful. The Secretary-General listened to the requests of the islands that were most affected. Aruba, Curacao, and Saint Maarten received praise for how they handled one crisis after another and have the commitment of the UN. □



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## An unforgettable dining experience awaits you at Tierra del Sol



**NOORD** — Imagine dining with a panoramic view surrounded by the golf's greens, the island's rugged north coast and the mesmerizing blue ocean in a relax dining experience, delighted in fresh cuisine with Caribbean, European and American flavors. Inspired by nature the restaurant is letting in the outside while the menu reflects what guests are looking for nowadays: variation, adults & younger diners choices, great prices with a friendly service. That is the great thing about the re-opened casually elegant restaurant at Tierra del Sol: it is for everyone and every occasion!

The Restaurant at Tierra del Sol transformed into a place of light, fresh looks, elegant though laid-back setting and the choice between inside and outside dining. Those two areas flow into each other in a natural way. Families with children dine on the big tables, some business people take a quick bite inside and a group of golfers enjoy a meal after their game. It is a fantastic concept that is

accessible for all without losing its essence: great food in a stylish interior design overlooking the spectacular view.

### Lunch with unmatched views

Guests praise Tierra del Sol restaurant for the magnificent views making it a popular lunch spot as well as a great after-golf lunch experience. Locals and visitors have been coming for years to Tierra del Sol to unwind and let go in this elegant yet laid-back setting. Savoring some handhelds delicacies such as Crispy Chicken Caesar Wrap, Fish or Steak Tacos or a Classic Burger are just a few to mention and for those Pizza and Pasta lover's they have a great selection of dishes as well.

### Divine Dining

Tune in for a culinary experience that will give dining another perspective. We are not talking about the standard 3-course menu, but about a journey through taste-land. The Restaurant at Tierra del Sol invites you to taste as many items as you wish from their extensive dining menu.



Fresh Oysters, Escargots, Flash seared Tuna Tataki, Beef Carpaccio, Cheese and Charcuterie Board or TDS Wedge Salad are only some of the welcoming dishes. For the main courses you can enjoy the Fresh Catch of the day, Caribbean Seafood, Filet Mignon, Lobster Thermidor, Korean Pork Chop, Vegan Bowl or Fettuccini Truffle Carbonara among others. Top it off with a sweet surrender of a caramel flan, New York Cheesecake or Chocolate Mousse are one of the choices.

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## Honoring of Victor and Sandra Galimidi at Marriott Surf Club

**PALM BEACH** — Recently, Mario Arends of the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure to honor one of Aruba's loyal and friendly visitors as a Goodwill Ambassador of Aruba. The Goodwill Ambassador certificate is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba 20 years and more consecutively.

**Victor and Sandra Galimidi** from New York were recently honored as Goodwill Ambassadors due to their 20th consecutive visit to Aruba.

Mario Arends representing the Aruba Tourism Authority conducted the ceremony which was held at the Marriott Surf Club. The Galimidi's loves coming to the island for the weather, food and the people and meet-

ing new friends.





# DIY or call a professional: Which is right for your remodel?

By **ANNIE MILLERBERND** of **NerdWallet**

A do-it-yourself remodel can be a budget-friendly way to freshen up your home. For some projects, it may take just a few YouTube videos to show you how to modernize your space.

But not every project is right for amateur renovators. Your skill level, budget and how important the project is to your home's value can all be deciding factors in whether to call a professional.

Here are home remodel projects you can probably DIY, and those that are better left to experts.

## DIY THE FLOORS AND WALLS

Aminah Chung and her husband Bernard, who share their DIY projects on social media, updated their Phoenix-area home's master bedroom and pantry, and built a playhouse for their kids.

Starting in small spaces or trying simple changes, like paint or paneling on a wall, can help you build confidence for bigger rooms, Aminah Chung says.

With a little extra research, installing new floors can be a spare-time project, says San Diego-based DIYer Liz Livery. She and her husband, a former structural engineer, installed laminate flooring in their home. "Things like that might feel overwhelming, but they aren't," she says. "They're very attainable, and it can actually save you a lot of money in the long run."

Tools can be a significant



A workman cuts sections of a beam at a housing site in Madison County, Miss., Tuesday, March 16, 2021.

Associated Press

portion of your DIY budget, says Chris Egner, president of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry. Add those costs to your budget, and ask if the tools are worth the investment, he says.

## USE CAUTION IN KITCHENS AND BATHROOMS

Homeowners should consider their skills before committing to a full DIY kitchen or bathroom remodel, Livery says, because those spaces are often essential to your home's value.

Some things, like painting the cabinets, may be within reach. But if you need new cabinets installed and you don't feel confident about accurately measuring for them, Livery says it may be worth using a professional

to get a quality finished product.

Using a contractor for a kitchen or bath remodel might cost tens of thousands of dollars, but Egner says their knowledge of building codes and design best practices may end up saving you money because they'll do the job correctly.

A designer can show you multiple options for a new layout and predict possible issues down the line, says Kevin Brown, design manager with Sunnyfields, a Baltimore-based kitchen and bath remodeling company.

The project may also finish faster, Brown says, since a professional can coordinate electricians and plumbers, avoiding "a real

nightmare" of potential delays if you do it yourself.

The Chungs have two kids and full-time jobs, so a DIY kitchen remodel would take a lot longer, Aminah Chung says. "I believe in doing the projects that you can do so that you can save the money for the projects you don't necessarily want to do," she says.

## OUTSOURCE PLUMBING, HVAC, ELECTRICAL WORK

It's best to let experts handle systems that make your house function, like the electrical, plumbing and HVAC system, Egner says. This work often involves permits and background knowledge, and the cost of a misstep can be high.

"A simple mistake in an installation of a toilet or a

faucet could lead to thousands and thousands if not tens of thousands of dollars worth of damage," he says. Livery is willing to knock down walls in her home, but she makes room in her budget to outsource some work, saving potential headaches down the road.

"When it comes to those very niche trades it's really, really nice to throw in the towel and hire out those jobs," she says.

## MANAGING HOME IMPROVEMENT COSTS

If you're still undecided, have a contractor write up an estimate and compare it with your DIY budget, Egner says. You can search for professionals on the NARI website.

He also recommends adding about 10% to 20% to your budget for unexpected expenses, which are inevitable with DIY and professional projects.

Cash is the interest-free way to pay for home improvement projects, but if you don't have enough available, shop around to find the best financing.

Home equity loans and lines of credit offer low interest rates and long repayment terms, which keep monthly payments low, but it could take a few weeks to a month to get approved. Personal loans have higher rates and shorter repayment terms, meaning your monthly payments are higher, but the debt is often cleared sooner. With these loans, you can typically get funds in a week or less. □

# Caution from OPEC+ producers to keep oil prices high

By **DAVID McHUGH**  
**AP Business Writer**  
**FRANKFURT, Germany (AP)**

— Oil cartel OPEC and allied producing countries are sticking with cautious increases in the amount of oil they send to the global economy, a decision likely to support prices that are near seven-year highs amid fears of a Russian military move against Ukraine. The alliance of OPEC members led by Saudi Arabia

and non-members led by Russia agreed Wednesday to add 400,000 barrels per day in March. That is in line with plans by the OPEC+ group to add that amount of oil every month and gradually restore deep cuts made during the depths of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020.

The move comes as oil prices hover near their highest levels since 2014, pushing up gasoline costs for driv-

ers. U.S. oil traded up 1.2% at \$89.28, while international benchmark Brent crude was priced at \$90.09, up 1%.

Prices at those levels have led to pressure for more production from the U.S. and other consuming countries, which in November announced a coordinated release of oil from national reserves, a step that has not done much to curb the increase in prices



The sun sets behind an idle pump jack near Karnes City, USA, April 8, 2020.

Associated Press

as the economy bounces back from the pandemic

and consumes more fuel for travel and industry. □



# CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS** 43 Article

1 Remove 44 Comes in  
5 Window-washing  
goof

11 Fairy-tale monster

12 Get incisors

13 Bullfight cries

14 Like llamas

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42 Serve

## DOWN

1 Ruin

2 Lusty look

3 New target for a swindler

4 Come clean

5 Antlered animal

6 Principles

7 Sight from Yemen

8 Summer in Paris

9 Cry of insight

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## Yesterday's answer

10 Boxer Norton

16 Crunch targets

19 Standoff

20 Shore eroder

21 Elitist

22 Regretted

23 Gumbo base

28 Placid cooler

29 Copy fixer

40 Set fire to

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44						45			

2-3

AXYDLBAAXR  
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

2-3

## CRYPTOQUOTE

RPG'C TPHHB NLPFC TINC'X

VPPJ NGR TINC'X GPC VPPJ.

NFCIDGCYVYCB YX TINC'X

VPPJ. — SNV QPXDG

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: CONSTANT COMPLAINTS IS THE POOREST SORT OF PAY FOR ALL THE COMFORTS WE ENJOY. — BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

# Giant iceberg blocks scientists' study of 'Doomsday Glacier'



This photo provided by environmental scientist David Holland shows equipment set up on the Dotson Ice Shelf in Antarctica on Monday, Jan. 31, 2022.

Associated Press

By SETH BORENSTEIN  
AP Science Writer

Antarctica's so-called Doomsday Glacier, nicknamed because it is huge and coming apart, is mostly thwarting an international effort to figure out how dangerously vulnerable it is.

A large iceberg broke off the deteriorating Thwaites glacier and, along with sea ice, it is blocking two research ships with dozens of scientists from examining how fast its crucial ice shelf is falling apart.

Scientists from around the world are part of a multi-year \$50 million international effort to study the Florida-sized glacier by land, sea and below for the brief time the remote ice is reachable during the Antarctic summer.

Plans to examine the glacier's crucial ice shelf haven't been stopped but are sidetracked a bit, officials said.

This was the last of three international scientific expeditions aimed at the vulnerable ice shelf, said British Antarctic Survey geophysicist Rob Larer, chief scientist of the first research mission.

New York University en-

vironmental scientist David Holland, who planned to drill deep through the Thwaites ice shelf to measure the water's warmth below it, is aching close but not quite there.

Improvising, Holland decamped at the nearby Dotson ice shelf to do his research where no human had been before. He's hoping that along that blinding white ice and its rugged frozen cliffs he can learn about the unseen warm ocean water nibbling away at both Dotson and Thwaites from below. The smaller Dotson ice shelf is about 87 miles (140 kilometers) west of the Thwaites ice shelf.

The ice shelf "is the most important part of Thwaites and it's protecting itself and hiding from us," Holland said in a first video interview from the Dotson ice shelf. He called Dotson's ice shelf "this beautiful white desert-like landscape, brilliantly white actually. And it will all be gone and replaced by the Pacific Ocean in due course."

"Nobody can get to Thwaites this year," Holland told The Associated Press Monday. "We tried to cut through it for a week.

Couldn't do it. So we're next to it."

Thwaites is spawning more icebergs as it's falling apart, Holland said. This iceberg used to be the tongue or leading edge of Thwaites until it broke off about 20 years ago, Larer said. It measures about 43 miles by 28 miles (70 kilometers by 44 kilometers), almost the size of Rhode Island, according to the National Snow and Ice Data Center. Much of the problem is that loads of sea ice have gravitated around the huge iceberg. And that's ironic — and troublesome for researchers — because overall Antarctic sea ice is unusually low for this time of year, Larer said.

While parts of Thwaites' edges have fast-spreading cracks like a car windshield, safety mountaineers inspected where researchers set up camp on Dotson, and Holland isn't worried much about danger. As he spoke, a red helicopter landed to evacuate one of his eight-member team the ship because of a sprained ankle, which Holland said isn't too serious.

The key to the future of Thwaites is the ice shelf and its tongue. These edges with warm water underneath border the ocean and provide "back support" that holds the rest of the glacier in place, preventing it from falling into the sea, Holland said.

What worries scientists is that leading edge of the huge glacier is breaking apart in many places. Even though total collapse of the glacier could take hundreds or thousands of years, the edge is falling apart much sooner. And if that goes, researchers fear nothing may stop the rest from doing the same.

"I think the ice shelf will be gone in a matter of years to decades," Holland said via Zoom on a computer set up on an outdoor table in the 24-hour sun, where the morning temperature was -4 (-20 Celsius). "But the actual inland ice, that's the really unknown question." □

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# Life in chapters in 'The Worst Person in the World'

By JAKE COYLE

AP Film Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Last fall, film director Joachim Trier and the actors Renata Reinsve and Anders Danielsen Lie gathered at a restaurant in midtown New York to talk about why people seem to keep crying during their movie.

If their film, "The Worst Person in the World," was a weepy melodrama, such responses could be expected. But while "The Worst Person in the World" has moments of grief and loss, it's principally about an uncertain, meandering journey of self-discovery for a young woman (Reinsve) in early adulthood. The emotional response the film engenders has more to do with its warm compassion and fullness of spirit. It captures much of the delight, confusion, folly and romance of life, in 35mm.

"A friend of mine was jokingly saying, 'Oh, TV shows. Isn't that very 2016?'" Trier said. "There's something about: We need to fight for the big screen again and do something that breathes and has a big heart. That's where we're coming from." "The Worst Person in the World" is Norway's shortlisted Oscar submission and Trier's stab at something like a romantic comedy. It's already been a long ride for the film, which landed Reinsve the award for best actress at the Cannes Film



This image released by Neon shows Renate Reinsve in a scene from "The Worst Person in the World."

Associated Press

Festival last summer and opens in theaters Friday. Since then, it's been a regular at film festivals (including the New York Film Festival, during which an interview took place last September before the film's release was delayed) and on Top 10 lists (including that of The Associated Press).

It's the third film in Trier's so-called Oslo trilogy, a disjointed but similarly set group of films begun with 2008's "Reprise" and continued with 2012's "Oslo, August 31" — both of which starred Lie. "The Worst Person in the World," though, takes place over a longer stretch of time, with ellipses in between. It's a period of years in Julie's life that spans her relationship with a ready-to-settle-down

cartoonist (Lie) and a hard-to-shake chance encounter (Herbert Nordrum).

Including prologue and epilogue, the film has 12 chapters. Julie, a 29-year-old millennial searching for a purpose, envisions a grand narrative for her life but she experiences it without anything like an objective perspective.

"It's Scandinavian and pretentious but Kierkegaard once said 'We can only understand life backwards, but we're forced to live it forwards,'" says Trier. "We make a self-narrative where we do see our life in chapters. I put my life in chapters by the eras I made my films. I remember 10 years ago being with Anders making 'Oslo, August 31' and Renata was there, just out of the-

ater school and us realizing she was actually awesome and we had to do something later."

Reinsve had a small part in "Oslo, August 31" with just one line: "Let's go to the party."

"That's a very human thing to say," Lie says, chuckling. "Part of life."

While scripting "The Worst Person in the World" with his regular writing partner, Eskil Vogt, Trier began to imagine Reinsve, who had spent the intervening years largely in theater, in the role. The movie has been a breakthrough for the 34-year-old actor. Reinsve, who is still adjusting to her new fame, Julie's sense of constant existential wonder is easy to connect to.

"I agree with her a lot," says

Reinsve. "It's impossible to make a choice that's right. You just have to live it, you live out the chaos. But you don't know until later. I can relate to that very much. It's all chaos. I've just surrendered."

If "The Worst Person in the World" is about the indecision that can grip anyone as they navigate their way through life, it's an ongoing issue for Lie. While a celebrated and widely known actor (the National Society of Film Critics named him best supporting actor for his performance in "The Worst Person in the World"), Lie works as a full-time doctor in Oslo when he's not acting.

"That's my chaos," he sighs. But for the 43-year-old actor-doctor, the twists and turns of fate are hard to separate from the fictional lives he's played across the Oslo trilogy. To him, a connecting theme in the films is the clash between one's expectations for their life and how it actually turns out — on screen and off. "Reprise" led directly to Lie meeting his wife at a party for the film.

"We think that our lives will be like a story with a linear development. But when we live our lives, in the present, it's just random chaos all over the place. Why am I here? What's my purpose?" says Lie. "Then when you look back on your life, there's structure. □"

## Dolly Parton, Eminem, Lionel Richie among Rock Hall nominees



Lionel Richie performs at KAABOO Texas in Arlington, Texas on May 10, 2019.

Associated Press

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Dolly Parton, Eminem, Lionel Richie, Duran Duran and A Tribe Called Quest are among this year's first-time nominees for induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

The Cleveland-based institution announced 17 artists and groups being considered for Rock Hall induction, including Rage Against the Machine, Pat Benatar, Dionne Warwick, Carly Simon, Judas Priest and Beck.

Beck and Simon are also nominated for the first time. Eminem, who is playing the

Super Bowl Halftime Show with Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, Mary J. Blige and Kendrick Lamar, earned a nomination in the first year he was eligible.

This year's class will be announced in May, with an induction ceremony planned for later this year. "This year's ballot recognizes a diverse group of incredible artists, each who has had a profound impact on the sound of youth culture," said John Sykes, head of the foundation that runs the Rock Hall, in a press release on Wednesday.

Artists must have released their first commercial recording at least 25 years before they're eligible for induction.

Duran Duran singer Simon Le Bon thanked fans on Twitter for their support over the years. "This distinction is due in large part to the fact that we have an army of fans around the world who have unwaveringly supported us for the past four decades," he wrote.

The other nominees are Kate Bush, DEVO, Eurythmics, Fela Kuti, MC5 and the New York Dolls. □



# Old school dismissed: Brady, "Big Ben" and the end of an era

By **WILL GRAVES**  
AP Sports Writer

Tom Brady always had an innate sense of timing. Ben Roethlisberger too. Consider it a prerequisite — perhaps the most important one — if you want to spend a generation in the NFL. They were two sides of the same coin. Old school in their own way.

Yes, really.

Strip away the "TB12 Method" branding, shield your eyes from the bling of Brady's seven Super Bowl rings and his supermodel wife and all the "GOAT" merch and you'll find perhaps the most successful grinder in league history.

A slow, unremarkable sixth-round selection who squeezed every last ounce of talent — and then some — out of a body that hardly screamed "eventual all-time leader in just about everything" when the Patriots took a flyer on the scrawny kid from Michigan with the 199th overall pick in the 2000 draft.

Roethlisberger arrived with more fanfare four years later when Dan Rooney insisted the Steelers grab the 6-foot-5 manchild from Ohio with the 11th choice. Yet while Brady did everything to distance his image from the prospect who ran the 40-yard dash in 5.28 seconds (that's not a typo), Roethlisberger embraced his "Big Ben" persona while — just like Brady — evolving from game manager to franchise icon.

"Ben defied the TB12 Method in favor of the 'Throw Some Ice On It' method his whole career, and ended up an all-time-great with 6 Pro-Bowls and 2 Super Bowls," Brady tweeted after Roethlisberger retired on Jan. 27. "There's more than one way to bake a cake!" Maybe, but the cake looks a lot different now than it did when Brady and Roethlisberger began their respective ascensions in the early 2000s. The position Brady and Roethlisberger helped define is changing. When the Steelers and the Buccaneers stress they're not trying to find the next Roethlisberger or Brady this



**Pittsburgh Steelers' Ben Roethlisberger breaks away from Green Bay Packers' Jamari Lattimore (57) for a touchdown run during the second half of an NFL football game Sunday, Dec. 22, 2013, in Green Bay, Wis.**

Associated Press

week at the Senior Bowl in Mobile, Alabama, they're not kidding. For all of their greatness and the gold jackets that await them in Canton, Ohio, the game has moved on.

The proof has been broadcast into millions of homes over the last month during perhaps the most compelling playoffs in a century-plus of professional football. The future Roethlisberger and Brady fended off to the bitter end is finally here. The baton they carried for capably for so long has been passed to (or taken by) players who grew up idolizing them.

Patrick Mahomes. Josh Allen. Joe Burrow. The list goes on. Lamar Jackson. Justin Herbert. Dak Prescott. Maybe Jalen Hurts one day. Justin Fields too.

While they are all being asked to win like Brady and Roethlisberger did for so long it's the manner in which they are asked to go about it that is changing. Quarterbacks can no longer just stand in the pocket

as Brady did and make a series of micro-decisions as chaos envelops them. They need to do more than fend off defenders with one arm and fling game-altering passes with the other as Roethlisberger did.

Watch Allen lower his shoulder to take on linebackers. See Jackson spin defenders into the ground. Or Mahomes zig-zagging like a kid running away from classmates during a game of tag.

Even Burrow, as close to a Brady clone as perhaps there is, used a pair of scrambles to key Cincinnati's stunning rally past Mahomes and the Chiefs in the AFC championship game last week.

"The AFC is the quarterback conference," Ravens coach John Harbaugh said on Monday. "You've seen that the last two weeks."

And likely for years to come.

Mahomes is 26. Allen, Burrow and Jackson are 25. Herbert is 23.

They will likely spend the

next decade-plus taking turns appearing in the Super Bowl, gracing the cover of "Madden" — heck, Jackson and Mahomes have already done it — and crowding the top 10 in annual jersey sales.

Their rise has helped fuel another TV ratings surge for a league that already has an ability to capture the public's attention in ways other sports simply cannot. Their arrival en masse serves as a paradigm shift. As improbable as Brady's ascendance to GOAT-status seemed 20 years ago, he and Roethlisberger both fit the archetype of what an NFL quarterback should look — and play — like.

A month and a day before Brady was drafted, Dan Marino retired as the NFL's career leader in yards passing and passing touchdowns, a crown he passed on to Brett Favre, then Manning, then Brees, then Brady. Back then, Michael Vick was the anomaly.

And while Vick's singular talents may always make him

the ultimate outlier, he provided a blueprint that Allen, Jackson and others are using to carry the league into its second century.

Steelers head coach Mike Tomlin became keenly aware of this during the fall while his team struggled to contain the likes of Mahomes, Burrow and Herbert, who went a combined 5-0 against Pittsburgh this season, sometimes putting up eye-popping numbers in the process. Asked repeatedly during the year about what he's looking for in finding Roethlisberger's successor, he repeatedly talked about quarterback mobility.

That doesn't mean Tomlin is searching for Vick version 3.0. But the job requirements for what Tomlin and his brethren are asking their quarterbacks to do in 2022 bears only a passing resemblance to what Roethlisberger and Brady were tasked with in 2004.


Winning never goes out of style. It's the way teams are going about it that is changing. Brady and Roethlisberger's records will likely fall one day — expanded schedules and quarterbacks playing at a high level into their late 30s and beyond will see to that — but after 100-years plus of having a position dominated by a certain paradigm, the tide has shifted. Perhaps for good.

Maybe Brady, as astute a student of the game as anyone, could see it coming. He accepted the mantle as the position's standard-bearer and took it to once unimaginable heights.

He heads into the next phase of his life watching the players who grew up idolizing him playing a game — to paraphrase something golfing great Bobby Jones once said of a young Jack Nicklaus — with which Brady is not familiar. Brady and Roethlisberger took one form of a position as far as it could go. The Old School has been dismissed. The New School is in session. Sit down. Strap in. And enjoy the ride.

The GOAT certainly will. □





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## Washington's NFL team unveils new name as Commanders

By **STEPHEN WHYNO**  
AP Sports Writer

Washington has some new Commanders in town.

The NFL team announced its new name on Wednesday, 18 months after fresh pressure from sponsors helped convince the once-storied franchise to drop its old moniker following decades of criticism that it was offensive to Native Americans. The organization committed to avoiding Native American imagery in its rebrand after being called the Washington Football Team the past two seasons.

Washington is the latest American major professional team to abandon its name linked to Native Americans, and it was considered one of the most egregious.

Richard Sneed, principal chief of Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians based in Cherokee, North Carolina, has stressed Native Americans have more to worry about than names of sports teams, but said during the World Series that Washington was "the only name I felt was derogatory. Yeah, that's offensive. The rest of them never really bothered



**Dan and Tanya Snyder, co-owners and co-CEOs of the Washington Commanders, unveil their NFL football team's new identity, Wednesday, Feb. 2, 2022, in Landover, Md.**

me and still don't bother me to this day."

While Major League Baseball's Cleveland Guardians have changed their name, the NFL's Kansas City Chiefs, NHL's Chicago Blackhawks and baseball's Atlanta Braves have said they are not planning to make a similar change.

That doesn't sit well with IllumiNative, a Native American woman-led social justice organization, though founder and executive director Crystal Echo Hawk praised the move by the Commanders.

"Native mascots are inaccurate and stereotypical depictions of Native culture," she said in a statement. "They do not honor or celebrate Native peoples but are rather a tool of white supremacy created to dehumanize and objectify us. Research has shown time after time that Native mascots lead to lowered self-esteem and self-worth,

and increases rates of depression, self-harm, and violence against Native youth.

"Washington is not the only professional team that has done harm to Native peoples. The continued deliberate inaction from the NFL, NHL, and MLB that continue to shield the Kansas City Chiefs, Atlanta Braves, and Chicago Blackhawks perpetuates and enables an ecosystem of racism and bigotry that directly impacts Native peoples. The Washington Commanders are proof that ending the use of Native American imagery in sports is possible. The Cleveland Guardians are further proof."

Washington owner Dan Snyder said the change that pays "homage to our local roots and what it means to represent the nation's capital."

"As we kick off our 90th season, it is important for our organization and fans to

pay tribute to our past traditions, history, legacy and the greats that came before us," Snyder said. "We continue to honor and represent the Burgundy and Gold while forging a pathway to a new era in Washington."

President Joe Biden welcomed the name change by posting a picture on Twitter of Commander, his recently acquired German shepherd puppy, in front of the White House.

"I suppose there's room for two Commanders in this town," Biden wrote.

From 1932 until two seasons ago, Washington had used the name Redskins — which offended Native Americans and others.

As the Commanders, Washington keeps the same burgundy and gold colors that were around for the three Super Bowl championships in the 1980s and early '90s glory days. It follows the desire of team president Ja-

son Wright and coach Ron Rivera for the new name to have a connection to the U.S. military.

Commanders was chosen over other finalists such as Red Hogs, Admirals and Presidents. Red Wolves, an initial fan favorite, was ruled out earlier in the process because of copyright and trademark hurdles.

The rebranding process had been going on since the summer of 2020, when team officials opted for the temporary Washington Football Team name that lingered into the 2021 season.

The change comes amid the organization's latest controversy: dozens of former employees describing a toxic workplace culture, which caused Snyder to commission an investigation that was taken over by the NFL. After the investigation by attorney Beth Wilkinson's firm, the league fined Washington \$10 million and Snyder temporarily ceded day-to-day operations of the team to his wife, Tanya, while he focused on a new stadium agreement.

The league did not release a written report of Wilkinson's findings, a move that sparked criticism. The U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Reform is holding a roundtable discussion Thursday with a handful of former team employees to discuss their experiences. Getting a stadium deal done is next on the agenda for Snyder and his front office. The team's lease at FedEx Field expires after the 2027 season and momentum is building for an agreement in Virginia, though sites in Maryland and the District of Columbia are still under consideration. □

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